

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

22 SEPTEMBER 2014

The meeting commenced at 9.30 am in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor Peter Jackson (In the Chair)

Councillors: Jim Ainslie, Allan Barclay, Keith Dawkins, Steve Gibbon, and Brenda Loynes.

Also Present: Councillor Robbie Payne
Gordon and Stella Johnson, Mrs Day, members of the public.

Officers: Denise Ogden, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Alastair Smith, Assistant Director, Neighbourhoods
Mike Blair, Technical Services Manager
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

17. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Marjorie James.

18. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Jim Ainslie declared a prejudicial interest in Minute 21 and left the meeting during its consideration.

Councillor Ainslie declared a personal interest in Minute 22.

19. Minutes of the meetings held on 19 August and 21 August, 2014

Confirmed.

20. Minutes of the meeting of the Emergency Planning Joint Committee held on 5 August 2014

Received.

Councillor Ainslie left the meeting.

21. Northgate Bus Stop Re-Consultation *(Assistant Director, Neighbourhoods)*

Type of decision

Non key decision.

Purpose of report

To report the result of a recent consultation exercise (July 2014), relating to the possibility of re-locating the bus stop, which is currently adjacent 103 Northgate.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Neighbourhoods reported In 2011, consultation was undertaken in order to determine the level of support to re-locate the bus stop from outside of 103, to an area close to number 107 Northgate (which would include a newly constructed bus lay-by). The consultation responses proved to be negative, and the scheme was not progressed.

In early 2013, the Council was again approached about the possibility of re-locating the bus stop. This request was raised by the landlord of number 103 (which is divided into flats), as the intention was to improve the appearance of the building in an attempt to make the flats more desirable to potential tenants. A further consultation was undertaken with 11 residential properties in the vicinity of the bus stop, Ward Members and the Parish Council. There were 6 objections to the proposal, and 2 in favour of moving the bus stop and constructing the new bus lay-by.

At the meeting of the Neighbourhood Services Committee (August 9th 2013), Members approved the re-location of the bus stop and lay-by construction, to the area between Brig Open and 107 Northgate. As a result of this decision, the Council received correspondence from a Ward Councillor, residents of the Headland and a 200 named petition, opposing the approved re-location.

Due to the large number of objections to the re-location it was proposed, at the Neighbourhood Services Committee meeting on the 11th November 2013, to further review the proposals, and for the outcome to be reported back to a future meeting of the Committee. However, Members were of the unanimous view that the original decision of the Committee on 9th August should stand.

Following this, a formal complaint was received from a resident into the process and the decision made on the issue. Following investigation, the Committee was required to give consideration to the matter being placed on

a future agenda of the Neighbourhood Services Committee, ensuring that both the complainant and ward councillors receive prior written notice of such meeting.

A further consultation had now been undertaken (July 2014), with letters sent to 52 local residential and business properties (evens 4 to 46 and odds 75 to 129 Northgate), Ward Councillors, the Parish Council and Neighbourhood Manager. A total of 21 (40%) responses had been received, with 3 (5.76%) in favour of the proposal and 18 (35%) against.

As stated in the 9th August 2013 Committee report, the estimated cost of the scheme is £40,000, funded by the Tees Valley Bus Network Improvements project (which is jointly funded between the Department for Transport and Hartlepool Borough Councils Local Transport Plan – with a 65% / 35% split respectively).

Members sought clarification on the most recent request for the moving of the bus stop and the number of complaints that had been received in relation to the current position, which was none.

Councillor Payne, a ward Councillor for the Headland and Harbour ward commented that nearly 90% of the people that had responded to the consultation were against the moving of the bus stop. Regardless of the size of consultation, no private landlord should be benefitting through the spending of public money. Local residents did not want the bus stop moving. One resident had lost the sale of their house because of the proposal to move the bus stop. This issue had never been brought to Members attention on safety grounds and in some ways the location of the stop reduced the propensity for speeding around the corner when there was a bus at the stop. Councillor Payne requested that the Committee leave the bus stop where it was as requested by local residents.

Mrs Day, a local resident and lead petitioner was present at the meeting and addressed the Committee with her concerns if the bus stop was moved. Mrs Day also circulated some photographs at the meeting to showing the location of the existing bus stop and the proposed re-location site. Mrs Day considered that there would be additional safety problems caused by the proposed relocation and considered that the existing site was the safer alternative. Local residents considered that there had been no calls previous to the current request from the landlord of the property by the bus stop to move it and it had been in its current location for as long as anyone could remember.

The location was a blind bend that was a concern with local residents reporting accidents. When the buses used the stop in its current location, they did, however, cause traffic to have to slow significantly and often wait until the bus moved on. If the stop was in its proposed location, traffic would come around a blind bend to often find a bus moving out of a bus stop. Local resident considered this to be more dangerous and believed that on safety grounds alone the bus stop should remain in its current

position.

The Chair in opening the matter for debate by the Committee proposed that should the decision be to leave the stop in its current position it should be elongated to allow buses to pull fully into the stop easing the situation for traffic moving past when a bus was present at the stop. As this may require the removal of a parking bay, then additional spaces could be found. This was supported in the meeting.

Members considered that in light of the evidence put forward in the consultation and by Mrs Day at the meeting, the moving the bus stop would be against the wishes of the local residents and may exacerbate any safety concerns over the current location. Members supported the proposal put forward by the Chair to elongate the bus stop as this would respond to the Parish Council's safety concerns. Members also considered it inappropriate to move the stop simply to enhance a property operated by a private landlord. There were also some concerns expressed at the condition of the property in question.

Members asked if the landlord had been invited to the meeting to make his case. The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods stated that in accordance with the Council protocol on petitions, the lead petition and ward Councillors had been invited to the meeting.

The Chair put the proposal to leave the bus stop to its current position but to elongate the marked lay-by to allow buses to pull in fully and that if this required the removal of a parking space, this be re-provided elsewhere. This was supported unanimously by the Committee.

Decision

1. That in light of the consultation response the bus stop on Northgate remain in its current position.
2. That the current marked lay-by be extended to allow buses to pull in fully and if this requires the removal of a marked parking bay, then this be re-provided nearby.

Councillor Ainslie returned to the meeting.

22. Headland Flooding Update *(Assistant Director, Neighbourhoods)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To update Members on initiatives that have been undertaken to address the issue of access to Hartlepool Headland during flooding events following the floods of December 2013.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Neighbourhoods reported that on 5th December 2013 the British Isles experienced the worst tidal surge seen in 60 years, which was accompanied by severe storm weather, with winds of up to 80mph recorded across Scotland and northern parts of England

As a result of this the Environment Agency issued 60 severe flood warnings (risk to life) and a further 120 flood warnings in England and Wales. The surge was the worst since January 1953, although flood defences built since then meant many parts of the country were better protected than they were in the 1950s, with high water levels on the River Tees being the highest recorded in 150 years.

During the event over 300 people were evacuated, 10,000 premises lost electric supply and three Top Tier COMAH sites were inundated in the Tees Valley area. Hartlepool fared relatively well during the storm, with no property damage, nor evacuations required, although residents in the Marina area were alerted to the possibility by the Police. There were only two incidents of note in the town one being the breach of the sea defences at Greatham Creek and the other being the Headland becoming isolated due to flooding in the Thorpe Street area.

At the peak of the storm, water levels on the highway at Thorpe Street were such that it was not possible to pass in a car. Tidal levels exceeded the height of the dock walls resulting in overspill into the docks operational area, making it impossible for any pumping operations to be carried out from the highway in the Thorpe Street area. There was also some damage caused to stock in warehousing on the site.

The Headland was isolated to normal traffic travelling on West View Road and Northgate for a period of around 3 hours from 16:30 hours to 19:30 hours according to Fire Service records of the incident.

During this period a fire tender was located on the Headland side of Thorpe Street and would have been available to respond to any incidents during the period of isolation.

The Assistant Director indicated that while Thorpe Street was blocked two alternative routes operated for short periods of time. Some traffic was permitted to travel through Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority land, (the Docks), until such time as the overtopping of the quay made this unsafe.

Also, for a short period of time the Police directed traffic through the Brus Tunnel and across Central Park onto Old Cemetery Road. Both of these alternatives, where, however, unviable solutions for any future events and it would be highly unlikely they would be used again.

Since this event discussions have taken place with Northumbrian Water with regard to having controls installed. Northumbrian Water Authority agreed to an accelerated programme of works, which subsequently begun mid- August, to provide two “flaps” which will close at high tide preventing water reaching the public highway. This would in essence prevent the highway flooding during any future high tide events. The Assistant Director commented that this work had now been completed and he publically thanked Northumbrian Water for ‘fast tracking’ these works.

Other contingency plans that had been considered were and emergency road access between West View Road and Old Cemetery Road via Heortnesse Road, the potential use of pontoons, and storage facilities in highway drainage associated with a potential new roundabout for the “Steetley” housing development. It was believed that the new access required for the housing development on the old Steetley site could provide the best available solution to similar future flooding events and also maintain access to the Headland.

Members thanked the Assistant Director for the update report on the flooding incident and believed that the solutions in place were the best that could be delivered now. Members supported the longer term solution that would form part of the new access to the Steetley site.

The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods advised Members that the solutions now in place and the potential longer term solutions had been driven forward by the Assistant Director. The solutions now in place should receive some positive press coverage and the Director indicated she would pursue this with the Public Relations Manager.

Members queried what steps PD Ports had taken to alleviate similar events on their site. The Assistant Director indicated that he had met with PD Ports who had been quite severely affected by the storm surge. Unfortunately there was not much they could do if faced with a similar event of the dock over-topping in the future.

The Chair welcomed the report and thanked Officers for their work in providing the solutions in conjunction with partners. It was suggested that the slides used in the presentation given by the Assistant Director be shared with other Members to inform them of the steps taken as a result of this flooding event.

Decision

That the report be noted.

23. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

The Chair indicated that regular Committee attendees Gordon and Stella Johnson had very recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. On behalf of the Committee the Chair extended his congratulations to Mr and Mrs Johnson and presented them with a small gift from the Council.

The meeting concluded at 10.30 am.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

PUBLICATION DATE: 29 SEPTEMBER 2014